



Youth Leadership St. Louis is the St. Louis region's only established inter-district high school program that is non-competitive in nature. No other program brings together such a large and diverse group of students. YLSL has been recognized locally, nationally, and internationally for its excellence and service to youth.

With the commitment and support of strong school and community partners, YLSL provided **126 students from 22 schools and one community organization, from 50 different zip codes**, with information, inspiration, and guidance to become the next leaders in their communities.

Last year, YLSL welcomed six new school partners: Bishop DuBourg, Crossroads College Prep, DeSmet Jesuit High School, Rockwood Summit, Lift for Life Academy, and the Clyde C. Miller Career Academy. Students completed a trust-building opening overnight retreat and program sessions covering Health Care, Criminal Justice, Exploring Regional Economics, Valuing Diversity, Poverty, Social Responsibility and Leadership, the Power of Education, and a closing graduation program that is youth-led inclusive of an open house to showcase their respective Action Research Projects.

The FOCUS St. Louis 2018-2019 cohort of Youth Leadership St. Louis (YLSL) were better prepared to lead and engage with their schools and communities, work across difference, communicate effectively, and maintain interest in a range of issues critical to our region's success.

In 2018-19, **cohort outcomes** were overwhelmingly positive and demonstrate significant gains. Overall, YLSL participants report increased skills in the following areas:

- 86% report an increase in working with groups/teams
- 84% report an increase in getting along with others
- 82% report increase in communication skills
- 82% report increase in self-understanding/self-awareness skills
- 79% report an increase in decision-making skills
- 60% report an increase in management skills

As a result of YLSL, participants indicated the **top five individual gains** in the following areas: 74% are comfortable interacting with people different from me; 73% are more open minded, 68% know my values, 66% recognize the worth of others, 64% respect others' feelings, and 64% can create an atmosphere of acceptance.

Select YLSL Participant Testimonials

“YLSL taught me the value that a voice matters in society and what you say can really have an impact. It also gave me a lot of knowledge about my community that I did not have before. It helped me meet a lot of new people and broadened my mind to all the different perspectives that were and are out there in the world.”

-Colin Fitzgerald, Chaminade College Prep

“The activities held in this program, that I have participated in, have definitely helped me improve my soft skills. For example, I can remember a specific event with a program assistant that forced me to speak/express how I felt about a situation that made me VERY uncomfortable. After expressing my feelings and resolving the issues something that rarely gets accomplished I found it a bit easier for me to speak up for myself.”

- Bryce Thomas, Clyde C. Miller Career Academy

“YLSL has given me the opportunity to learn more about issues that the St. Louis population faces and has empowered me to make a greater difference in my community. I recommend this program to all high school students who want to take action and positively impact the people around them.”

- Connie Chen, Ladue Horton Watkins HS

“YLSL has positively impacted my life. When I first arrived I had a barrier built up from years of having my opinion overlooked or ignored based on my age, gender and race. YLSL put me in situations where each and every meeting, something chipped away at that wall to make me more confident in my voice. This program has taught me how to be a better leader and listener in all environments no matter how uncomfortable the topic or situation may be.”

- Kaylin D. Walters, Nerinx Hall

“I feel like I now have the power to make a real change in my community. YLSL has given me the facilitation and organizational skills as well as information on specifics topics to positively affect my community.”

- Peter Michalski, St. Louis University High

“YLSL has impacted my life by listening and learning about my city. It makes me feel more connected and obligated to help make an impact on my city.”

- Ali Mitchell, University City HS